

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Wolf:

As you consider programs that deserve funding, we respectfully request that you fully fund the Legal Services Corporation ("LSC") in the FY2010 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill.

Although the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 funded LSC at \$390 million, nearly \$40 million more than appropriated in FY 2008, this amount is still less than its funding level fifteen years earlier. In FY 1995, LSC was funded at \$400 million, which would be approaching \$600 million in today's dollars. For FY 2010, we request that you provide another significant increase in funding to support LSC and its mission.

Congress established LSC to operate as a private, nonprofit corporation to promote equal access to justice and to provide grants for high-quality civil legal assistance to low-income persons. LSC distributes more than 95% of its total funding to 137 independent nonprofit legal aid programs to low-income individuals and families in every congressional district. Programs which receive LSC grants help the most vulnerable, such as families facing unlawful evictions or foreclosures, displaced persons attempting to obtain federal emergency assistance, and women seeking protection from abuse. In fact, many programs have been besieged with requests for foreclosure assistance because of the subprime mortgage crisis.

Nonetheless, according to a 2005 study commissioned by LSC's Board of Directors, *Documenting the Justice Gap in America*, many recipient programs of LSC funds must turn away half of all individuals who qualify and seek their assistance because of the lack of resources. Thus about 50% of eligible potential clients are turned away because the programs are underfunded. Unfortunately, state, local, and private funding and pro bono support have been unable to close the access to justice gap. Further, the current economic downturn will only exacerbate the lack of resources of legal assistance programs. The result is a potential catastrophe for millions of low-income families and individuals throughout the country who need but are unable to obtain legal assistance in matters relating to their housing, employment, and access to health care.

We hope you will do everything possible to ensure that this program receives full funding in the FY2010 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill. We urge you to fund LSC at its requested \$485.1 million to help it provide legal assistance to those in urgent need.

Sincerely,

Steve Cole

Keith G. Miller

Donna F. Edwards

Anders J. Sjöberg

Glyson Y. Schwartz

Raul M. Grijalva

Mazie Hirono

Shelley Jackson Lee

Harold A. Wefers

Michael

Howard L. Berman

Corinne Brown

Nick Rahall

Jerrold Nadler

Melvin L. Watt

John Conyers Jr.

Carolyn B. Maloney

Wm. Lacy Clay

Patrick J. Toomey